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**SPEECH OF J. J. GURNEY, ESQ.** 1788-1847

*On the Abolition of Negro Slavery, delivered at a Public Meeting, held in the Guildhall, in the City of Norwich, on Wednesday, 28th January, 1824.*

COL. HARVEY IN THE CHAIR.

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IN rising for the purpose of once more presenting to my friends and fellow-citizens a series of Resolutions on the subject of Colonial Slavery, I must consider that I have some claim on the sympathy of the present meeting, for I come forward under a deep sense both of the importance of our object and of the difficulty, and delicacy which attend it in various points of view. I may confess, that two or three months since I was, as some of my friends well know, numbered amongst the fearful and faint-hearted in reference to this object, and the visit of our friend Clarkson was the means of re-animating my zeal, and of leading me to take a fresh survey of the principles on which the abolitionists are proceeding, and of the facts by which these principles are supported. This survey has completely convinced me that we are treading on sound and solid ground, and that if we persevere in our course, not only with moderation, but with firmness, our ultimate success is inevitable. I may now proceed to lay before you a few resolutions; [See last page.] in doing which, I beg it to be understood that I am acting only as the organ of a Committee, which has for a short time been established in Norwich, and over which our worthy Chairman has been kind enough to preside. In reading these resolutions, I shall take the liberty to explain the reasons which satisfy my own mind of their propriety. The first resolution is intended to express our cordial satisfaction in the resolutions agreed to by the House of Commons during its last sessions, on the subject of Colonial Slavery. In those resolutions the House declared,—1st, That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the slaves in the British Colonies. Such a declaration cannot fail to meet

the hearty approbation of the friends of the cause, since it plainly recognises the fact, that the condition of the slaves is at present defective, and in need of amelioration ; and since it pledges the House to the adoption of measures which should not be weak and merely nominal in their operation, but *effectual* and *decisive*. In the second resolution of the House of Commons, the ultimate object proposed is, that the negroes should participate in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of the subjects of these realms ; terms which plainly express nothing short of actual emancipation ; and the House looks forward to the attainment of this object by the temperate and judicious enforcement of preparatory measures. Here is a perfect coincidence with the sentiments of the abolitionists ; for while the complete emancipation of the slaves is undoubtedly our final object, we have never entertained the opinion that this could be accomplished immediately, but on the contrary, have always insisted on the necessity of such preparatory measures as might gradually introduce the negro to a condition adapted to the reception of his freedom. With this part of the resolutions of the House of Commons, therefore, it is our duty to express a cordial concurrence : and it cannot fail to be a source of much satisfaction that the House goes on to pledge itself to accomplish the great purpose in view at the earliest period that may be compatible with the welfare of the slaves, the safety of the colonies, and the fair interests of all the parties concerned. This declaration goes to the full extent of our wishes, and it gives me the opportunity of observing, that it never has been the intention of the abolitionists to neglect the fair interests of any of the parties, or to shrink from the consideration of such a compensation to the planters as can justly be claimed under the circumstances of the case. In upholding this view, we have the example of the Columbian Government, who have imposed a tax upon the whole community for the gradual redemption of the slaves, at a fair remunerating price. I adduce this example, not for the purpose of recommending this particular plan, but only to exemplify the general principle. Before I leave the consideration of my first resolution, I would just say, that a further ground of satisfaction is afforded by the unanimity with which the resolutions of the House of Commons were agreed to, not excepting those mem-

bers who were immediately connected with the West Indies, and who have thus pledged themselves to a co-operation with us in the prosecution of this interesting work.

My second resolution is intended to express the satisfaction which we feel in the important fact, that the institution and arrangement of the measures, of which the gradual abolition of slavery is to be the object, has been undertaken by the executive administration of the country: and I sincerely hope, that with whatsoever party any of us may be connected, and whatsoever may be our particular political sentiments, we shall be unanimous in passing this resolution. That ministers should have undertaken the prosecution of this object, is very satisfactory for obvious reasons. For in the first place, they are possessed of far more power to conduct it successfully than any other persons in the kingdom. Secondly, the situations which they hold give them an opportunity of obtaining a more accurate knowledge of the circumstances of the case than could be enjoyed by others, as all the secrets of the colonies are constantly laid open to their inspection. I am fully persuaded, moreover, that the sincerity of ministers, in reference to the present question, cannot, without any reason, be doubted. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in the course of the debate, did not hesitate so to pledge himself to this cause, that, standing as he does in a conspicuous station, in the midst of this great and free country, it would be utterly impossible for him now to withdraw himself from it. This pledge was followed up by the communications of Earl Bathurst to the Governors of the respective colonies, which, though mild and moderate, were at the same time firm and decided, and one of which I will now take the liberty of reading to the meeting. You will observe the decided tone in which Lord Bathurst here insists upon the immediate and total disuse of the punishment of flogging, as it relates to women, and in which he recommends, that with regard to men the whip should no longer be employed as the stimulus to labour; and you will, I am sure, agree with me in approving the wisdom of his thus making a distinction in the treatment of the two sexes the foundation of his system for ameliorating the condition of the slaves; for no society can ever rise from a state of barbarism while this distinction continues to be disregarded.

The third resolution, to which I would now call your attention, expresses, that under all the circumstances of the present question, it is peculiarly desirable that the people should continue to declare their sentiments by petitions to Parliament, in order to strengthen the hands of Government in the efforts which they are making for the benefit of the slaves. That such a resolution is perfectly constitutional will be immediately allowed : for nothing can be more obviously consistent with British principles, than that the people should address their petitions to the legislature, in order to assist the executive administration in the prosecution of an object which has their own full concurrence. But the point to which I particularly wish to direct your attention, as a ground for the present resolution, is that of the difficulties which have been thrown in our way. Were the abolition of slavery a perfectly easy matter ; were there no opposition to encounter, and no difficulty to surmount, it would be wholly unnecessary for the people to repeat their petitions. In such case there could be no question but that Government would effect the object in view without any unnecessary delay. But what is the real state of the question ? How has Lord Bathurst's communication to the colonies been received ? In several of the Islands it has been met by a determined and even furious contradiction. By the legislature of Jamaica a series of resolutions have been drawn up in opposition to this Minister's recommendations, which, were it not almost too ridiculous to imagine, might even be construed as expressing an intention of rebellion against the mother country. Towards the *administration* of that country, this legislature has certainly displayed no peculiar affection ; for they have actually appointed a committee for the purpose of drawing up a petition to the King, that he may be pleased to remove Lord Bathurst from his councils for ever. Among the senators of the colonial legislatures, one gentleman in Barbadoes is pleased to meet the injunctions of our Colonial Secretary respecting the flogging of women, not only with violent opposition, but with vulgar jokes on the gallantry of Englishmen. Such raillery, on a subject of so delicate and affecting a nature, does, I confess, appear to me to be utterly abominable. In the Island of Trinidad, a large public meeting of the planters has been instigated, by Earl Bathurst's communications, to pass a series of resolutions, in

which they declare that the flogging of women, as well as of men, is indispensibly necessary to the good order of the colonies ; that it is quite a mistake to suppose that the holding of Sunday-markets is any profanation of the sabbath ; and that nothing more is needed with respect to the evidence of slaves, since that evidence is already received, *when it is corroborated by two white men*. The vengeance of the West Indies has even been wreaked on the ministers of religion, and the *gentlemen* of Barbadoes have united their forces in demolishing the meeting-house of a Methodist missionary, and in forcing him to fly from the island for his life, on account of his supposed connections with the *villainous African Institution*. And when a proclamation was issued by the Governor of the island, offering a reward on the conviction of the offenders, it was received by these gentlemen rioters with nothing but insult and mockery.

Such is the nature of the opposition, which renders it desirable for us to strengthen the hands of Government by our petitions to Parliament. And now permit me to make a short digression, that I may consider the subject of *Insurrection*. There is nothing which has so much alarmed the public mind, in reference to the present question, as the vehement declaration of some of the Colonial Legislatures, that the benevolent proceedings of our Government could not fail to be productive of the most formidable insurrections amongst the slaves, that the planters would be the martyrs to our heedless philanthropy, and that all the Islands would unquestionably overflow with blood. On these declarations I would observe, that the Colonial Legislatures would, in my opinion, hardly be so foolish as to promulgate such inflammatory sentiments, did they really apprehend that there was a danger of insurrection. And, indeed, these gentlemen are prone to contradict themselves on the subject, for I find from the *Courier* of yesterday, that one of the members of the legislative assembly of Jamaica, about six weeks since, moved a message to the Governor, that the House, on examining the slave law, had found it complete in all its parts, and that it was undesirable to take any further measure, at present, to meliorate the condition of the slaves, since, in consequence of the discussion in Parliament, it might tend to unsettle their minds, which are *now* (*viz.* six months after the

arrival in Jamaica of the first intelligence of that discussion) *perfectly quiet and contented*.

But this is the question on which it will be suitable to advert to some very plain moral principles. Is it kindness? is it benevolence! Is it the hope of future relief from hardship, which induces a man to rise up in anger against his neighbours? Certainly not; for these things have no other tendency, even in the most uncultivated minds, than to pacify and to please. It is the continuance of oppression, the despair of any amelioration in the condition of the oppressed, which produces a disposition to rise in arms against the oppressor. Let me suppose for an instant, that I was myself a slave in the West Indies, and subject to the many hardships which accompany such condition. Were I told that the hand of benevolence was to be extended towards me, that through the kind interference of the British Parliament my sufferings would be gradually mitigated, and in the end entirely removed, the effect on my mind of such information would, I think, undoubtedly be this, that I should be the more willing to bear my sufferings for a time, because of the bright hope of a future deliverance. But were I at the same time informed, that the benevolent instructions of Parliament had been violently opposed by the Colonial Legislature, to which I was immediately subject—were I told that a Committee of that Legislature had been appointed to draw up a petition to the King, for the removal from his councils of that minister who was to conduct those schemes of mercy in my favour—that public meetings of the planters had been passing resolutions, insisting on the continuance of the cruel punishment of the whip, as applied both to men and women, as well as of that unjust provision which prevents my evidence from being received in a court of justice—did the intelligence moreover reach me, that the meeting-house which I had been accustomed to attend was levelled with the ground, and the minister, from whom I received instruction, banished from the island, so that I was now to be deprived of the only consolations which my hard lot had admitted; I mean, the consolations of religion: under such circumstances, I say, however it might still be my Christian duty to suffer, rather than rebel, yet I must confess, that the incitements to rebellion with which I should then

be surrounded, would appear to be overpowering, and nearly irresistible. Now what do you think of the fairness displayed by these gentlemen, when they turn round upon us and say, the fault is yours ; our blood is upon your heads ? Undoubtedly it must be confessed that our proceedings form one link in the chain ; for we know that all our actions are a connected part of that vast series of events which will terminate in the glory of God, and in the welfare of those that fear him. But such an admission can in no degree justify the notion, that we are responsible for the evil consequences apprehended by the planters. Let us suppose, in order to familiarize our argument, that a tradesman exposes his silks and his muslins at the window of his shop, and that the thief is thereby tempted to break in and steal, and is in consequence brought to the gallows. Now should the thief turn round upon the tradesman and say,—you are the cause of my suffering ; if you had not held out the temptation, I should not have committed the crime ; my blood is upon your head :—would it not, in such a case, be competent to the tradesman to reply, No, my friend, the cause of your suffering is not my right, but your wrong ? If then the benevolent instructions of the British Government are so abused by the planters, as that they thereby expose themselves to personal danger and distress, however they may be inclined to ascribe their sufferings to our philanthropy, we may with the utmost justice reply, that they are to be attributed not to our *right*, but to their *wrong*.

I must now advert more particularly to the only insurrection which has of late actually taken place in our colonies, the insurrection at Demerara. I consider it as one instance of unfairness in an article which has lately appeared in the Quarterly Review, that this insurrection is there attributed, without any reserve or hesitation, to the late discussion in Parliament : and a similar unfairness has been evinced by many other persons who have endeavoured to impede the course of our proceedings. —Since the facts of the case are at present not fully known, and since they will soon come under the consideration of Parliament, it would be improper by any decisive assertion to pre-judge the question. In the mean time, however, it is certain that the connection of the Demerara insurrection with that discussion has not been proved, and in my opinion, it is very far

from probable. Gentlemen perhaps are hardly aware that this insurrection, which has been represented by the colonists as so formidable, and which must have arisen, if we are to believe their statements, out of deep and *long-laid* plots, broke out within three or four weeks of the first arrival of any intelligence of the colony of what had taken place at England. It is also to be observed that the greater part of the slave population in that colony speak no other language than Dutch, and were therefore in all probability wholly unacquainted with these fearful contents of the English newspapers. I happen however to be acquainted with a few circumstances relative to Demerara, which throw no little light upon the present subject. I have lately seen a communication from a gentleman of the highest respectability, resident on the spot, in which some account is given of certain individuals who are accused of having been active in the insurrection. One of these was a young black, by name Jack, who is described as a person of no common intellect, and of a very ardent and affectionate temperament. Jack connected himself with a young woman as his wife, who was the object of his warmest affections, and with whom he lived for a time in real domestic happiness. But you know that the marriage of slaves has no legal sanction. The young woman became the object of the wicked and unruly desires of the overseer of the plantation on which Jack resided. She was torn from the bosom of her husband, and forced to become the mistress of the overseer. Thus was the domestic felicity of poor Jack destroyed for ever ; and he left with a thorn rankling in his bosom, to which there can be no parallel, in a state of misery, disaffection and despair. Now surely it is a perversion of reason, utterly at variance with all moral philosophy, and which even the most childish system of ethics ever invented would rise up and condemn, to attribute the insurrectionary movements of this unhappy negro to the *abstract benevolence* of a distant Parliament, rather than to the *actual and enormous iniquity* of which he was himself the helpless and unoffending victim : and against which, be it observed, the boasted laws of our colonies afforded him no protection or remedy whatsoever. One observation only I have now to add on the subject of insurrections. As our friend Clarkson reminded us a few nights since, we ought ever to distinguish between the *occasion* and the *cause* of events.—



Now whatsoever may have been the occasion of the insurrections which have at various times taken place in the West Indies, the *cause* of them is unquestionably to be found in slavery, and in slavery alone. Nor shall we ever get rid of a liability to these frightful disasters, until we are delivered from that unrighteous system out of which they arise.

To return to the resolution, I hope it is now sufficiently clear that the obstructions to the progress of our cause render it necessary for us to strengthen the hands of Government by our petitions to Parliament. But were these obstructions absolutely insurmountable;—were the opposition of the West Indians such as it was impossible to overcome,—were there no hope of scaling the mountain before us, we should sink into flat despair, and soon arrive at the conclusion that all our petitions would be useless. It is therefore with peculiar pleasure that I turn to another branch of the subject, and proceed to shew, that these improvements, which by the Legislature of Jamaica are declared to be undesirable and almost impossible, are by the Legislatures of some others of the Islands cordially approved, and in part already acted on. At Tobago, an Act was passed during the last year, which establishes courts of judicature for the trial of slaves, and gives them the benefit of trial by jury; which admits the evidence of slaves against white persons, appoints guardians to take cognizance of their complaints, directs persons committed as slaves to be discharged as free, unless an owner proves his title to them within six weeks, secures to slaves the possession and inheritance of their property, abolishes the Sunday market, and grants them one day in every week for the cultivation of their provision grounds, except during four months in the year. At Grenada, in consequence of the communication of Lord Bathurst, a Committee of the Legislature was appointed to draw up regulations, in order to secure for the slave a sufficient time to work in his ground, a specific allowance of food and clothing, and the right of enjoying and bequeathing personal property: to limit and record all punishments: to admit in certain cases the competency of slave-evidence: to discontinue public markets on the Lord's-day; and to devise some effectual mode for ensuring to the negroes moral and religious instruction. At Nevis, we find the two branches of the Legislature declaring that they can see *no possible objec-*

tion to a slave purchasing his own freedom, subject to regulations, and resolving positively that the cart-whip shall be abolished entirely as an instrument of driving; that as far as practicable the slaves shall become *adscripti glebæ*, and should not be separated from the soil; that measures should be taken towards the admission of slave evidence under certain regulations, and that the punishment of females by cart-whipping and the exposure of the person, should be discontinued. At St. Christopher's, the King's Council has entered into some similar resolutions. "These," say they, "are framed with a view of improving the physical and moral condition of the slave, so as eventually to qualify him for a state of freedom, to *which object this Board will earnestly contribute*, upon such provisions being made for the protection of the person and property of the proprietors of slaves in this island, as may be expected from the wisdom and justice of the British Parliament and from the benevolent solicitude of our Sovereign."

Now while the intelligence received from these Islands of the intentions and acts of their legislatures afford us a solid encouragement to believe that the good and great work is really going forward, that intelligence is the more important, because (with every allowance for the different circumstances of different parts of the West Indies) it must be considered on the whole, as offering to the fiery resolutions passed in Jamaica and some other colonies, a flat, decided, and most satisfactory contradiction.

We learn from the declarations made by these more pliable islanders, that the work of amelioration and emancipation may go forward not only with advantage to the slave, but with safety to the planter. And here, without going at large into the subject, I would earnestly recommend to your attention a pamphlet lately published by Thomas Clarkson, entitled, "*Thoughts on the necessity of improving the condition of the slaves, with a view to their ultimate emancipation.*" That pamphlet contains a description of several instances of the emancipation of slaves in large bodies: and in every one of those instances the act of mercy, under the influence of wise and salutary regulations, was found to be perfectly consistent with the safety and advantage of all the parties concerned. In the case of St. Domingo, more particularly, which we have been accustomed to regard as so full of horror, it appears that 500,000 negroes were emancipated by

the agents of the Revolutionary Government of France, in the year 1793, (being for a certain period attached to the soil, in the first instance) and this vast population of slaves continued to work on the estates of their masters in an orderly and industrious manner, until, in the year 1802, the whole island was thrown into a state of horrible confusion by the iniquitous attempt of Buonaparte, under the fatal influence of the planters, to reduce them by force to their pristine state of slavery.

But before I finally offer my resolution for a petition, I must take the liberty of adverting to those general principles and facts on which our whole proceedings are grounded. That these proceedings should be marked by moderation is indeed earnestly to be desired. It is our decided wish that the measures of Government, in the pursuit of our object, should be prudent and temperate; and we are very far indeed from supposing, that there may not be many of the West Indian planters who treat their slaves with real benevolence. It is, I am sure, most agreeable to believe, that this may be the case with the great majority of their body. But while moderation and charity are thus exercised, it would be improper and absurd to shut our eyes either to principles or to facts. Now I suppose, that all present will agree with me in the position, that a condition of society in which one large portion of the population is the absolute property of another, *must* have a tendency to corrupt, degrade, and harden the heart. The Quarterly Reviewers, who have treated the sufferings of our West Indian slaves with so light and faint a touch, have, in the very same number, presented to their readers a powerful description of the abominable cruelties practised on the slaves in some of the states of North America. Now I will not undertake to calculate what allowance ought to be made for any supposed difference of character between the American and the Englishman, but of this I am fully assured, that man in his natural state, and until he is mended by something better than himself, is far too prone to evil, to be safely entrusted with unlimited power over his fellow-creatures. And now, with regard to facts:—the Quarterly Reviewer finds much fault with the assertion of that great and good man, William Wilberforce, an assertion which, in my opinion, does him real credit, that a proposition which has of late been bandied about in almost every part of the kingdom, viz. that the condition of

the West Indian slave is fully equal to that of the free peasantry of this country, is "monstrous in itself, and implies a total insensibility to the native feelings and moral dignity of man." Now, certainly, in persons who are unacquainted with the subject, this proposition may imply little more than total ignorance; but in those who know what Colonial slavery is, and are acquainted with all its effects, it does appear to imply such an insensibility. Let us briefly run through the comparison between the two parties. I apprehend that the views of the persons who are so much attached to this proposition are limited to the mere physical condition of the degraded slaves. The slaves, it is said, are clothed, fed, and housed; and we grant that a certain provision of clothing, such as that warm climate requires, is directed by the Colonial law to be given to them; that they have a small allowance of salt fish, and have provision grounds, which they are permitted to cultivate on the sabbath-day. In these two points I conceive that the comparison is still to the advantage of the British peasant. The same may certainly be said with reference to habitation, as the huts of the negroes are greatly inferior to the English cottages. And with regard to labour, our peasantry would, I presume, be very unwilling to exchange their condition for that of those unfortunate bondmen, who not only work like themselves for nine or ten hours during the day, but who for several months in the year are compelled to continue their drudgery during half of every night, or the whole of every other night. But let it be conceded for a moment, that in point of clothing, food, housing, and labour, the condition of the West Indian slave and that of the free British peasant are equal; there are still a few other particulars of no very inferior moment, in which a strange difference will be found between the two parties in the comparison! In the first place, the British peasant settles when he pleases in married life, as easily as any other person, and henceforward no man may interfere with his domestic comforts. The West Indian slave, who takes a woman for his companion, is for the most part not married at all. And here I would observe, in passing, that the vaunted marriages of slaves asserted by "the Voice from Jamaica," to have taken place during the last year in that island, are believed, by persons very well acquainted with the subject, to have been effected in consequence of

the discussions in England, and even in the course of a very few hours. But be the slave married in form or not, his connubial connection is totally unprotected by law: and the caprice of his master, or the sale by auction of the property of which he forms a part, may, at any time, tear his wife from his bosom, and separate his helpless children from their parents. The negro works under the stimulus of the lash, and the laws of our colonies bestow upon his master or overseer a full authority for inflicting on him, his wife, or his daughter, thirty-nine lashes for any fault or misbehaviour, real or imaginary. Now I do not know what one of our free peasants would say to such an assault and battery, but I rather apprehend that he would be found to rise up in his own defence, and that in no very inefficacious way. Be that as it may, however, the law is always open to him, just as open, I am happy to say, as it is to our worthy Chairman himself, or to the King upon his throne. But how is it with the miserable slave? If his master even exceeded the prescribed number of his lashes—if he multiply the tens into hundreds—if he absolutely murder him in cold blood, and if there be present ten thousand witnesses, yet, if all those witnesses be slaves like himself, the laws of the colonies afford no effective redress or satisfaction whatsoever, and the offender may even enjoy an *absolute impunity*. But it is not only as it relates to the evidence of slaves that the laws of our colonies are of unequal application. During the last year a case of great notoriety occurred in Jamaica, of a capital crime repeatedly committed, under circumstances of the most monstrous atrocity, on the person of a child only nine years old. It happened that a free person witnessed the transaction. The offender was prosecuted and convicted on the clearest evidence. An arrest of judgment was moved by his counsel, on the ground that the sufferer was a slave. So overpowered were the feelings of the Judges by the atrocity of the case, that they over-ruled the objection, and condemned the criminal to death. But on a cool survey of the case, after the trial was over, the Chief Justice of the Island was obliged to acknowledge his own opinion, (though I believe the case to be still undecided) that the sentence could not be legally carried into effect, and thus this tremendous crime was likely to descend to the level of a simple misdemeanor, punishable only by a short imprisonment or a small fine.

In short, the British peasant is his own master and a free-man. The West India slave is a mere chattel. He is reduced to the condition of the beast of burden. He may be bought, sold, divorced from his wife, separated from his children, worked hard, flogged, tortured, branded with red hot iron, and, under particular circumstances, even murdered, according to the arbitrary determination of his fellow men. And now I may appeal to the whole of this meeting, whether it be not indeed true, that the proposition to which I have been alluding is "monstrous, and that it implies a total insensibility to the native feelings and moral dignity of man?"

In conclusion I beg leave to say, that on every occasion, whether public or private, it is my desire, however inadequately fulfilled, to act on the principles of a Christian. You must allow me, therefore, to say a few words on the notion which has been very much circulated of late, that slavery, as it exists in our colonies, is not inconsistent with those principles. I say that it is utterly at variance with the dictates of Christianity, that one man should be regarded as the mere chattel of another; utterly at variance with those dictates, that we should compel our fellow creatures to labour for us, and give them no wages for that labour; that we should inflict upon them the cruel punishment of the whip at our own discretion; that we should degrade, expose, and torture even the female sex; that we should subject whole families to writs of *Venditioni exponas*, by which the nearest ties of affection may be forcibly torn asunder; and finally, that we should allow of a system under which persons, who, like ourselves, possess immortal souls, are regarded and treated like the beasts that perish. Assuredly, all these particulars are in absolute contradiction to that golden rule which has been so appositely quoted by our Chairman—"Do unto others as ye would have others do unto you." Even under the Jewish law, and before the introduction of Christianity, how often were the prophets engaged in proclaiming liberty to the captive! "Is this the fast that I have chosen, saith the Lord, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it that he bow down his head as a bulrush, and spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will ye call this a fast and an acceptable day unto the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bands of wickedness; to undo the heavy burdens; to let the oppressed go

free; and to break every yoke." While therefore I would encourage every disposition to moderation and charity, while I can sincerely declare, that no persons connected with the present question appears to me to be so much the objects for *deep* commiseration as the oppressors themselves, I cannot but remember, that in grounding our proceedings on the noble principles of the British Constitution, and on the celestial sanctions of Christianity itself, we are standing on a rock which cannot be shaken; I must therefore implore our benevolent and energetic Chairman, I must implore our worthy Member for the county, (now present) I must implore you all, whatsoever stations you may occupy, never to relax your efforts in this holy cause, but to go forward with a step at once measured and determined—at once gentle and resolute, until that happy day shall arrive when every individual within the whole circuit of the British dominions shall be able to lift up his head with thankfulness and joy, and say—**BEHOLD I AM FREE!**

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#### RESOLUTIONS.

*First.*—That this Meeting feels the highest satisfaction in considering the following Resolutions, on the subject of Negro Slavery, passed by the House of Commons in the last Session of Parliament :—

1. That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for ameliorating the condition of the Slave Population in his Majesty's Colonies.

2. That through a determined and persevering, but judicious and temperate enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the Slave Population, such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges, which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects.

3. That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose at the earliest period that may be compatible with the well being of the Slaves, the safety of the Colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of all parties concerned therein.

4. That these Resolutions be laid before his Majesty.

*Second.*—That this Meeting considers it an additional cause of satisfaction, that the institution and arrangement of the measures necessary for effecting the great objects which are expressed in the Resolutions of the House of Commons, should have been undertaken by the Executive Administration of the country.

*Third.*—That on account of the difficulties which hinder the attainment of these objects, it appears to this Meeting necessary, that the people should express their continued interest in them; and by their Petitions to Parliament endeavour to strengthen the hands of Government in the prosecution of this good work.

*Fourth.*—That a Petition be therefore presented without delay from the inhabitants of this city to the House of Commons, that they would carry into effect, in such a measure as they may deem most wise and salutary, and as speedily as under these circumstances is possible, their late Resolutions on the subject of Colonial Slavery; and that the Members of the City be requested to present it.

*Fifth.*—That a subscription be now entered into in order to defray the expenses attendant on this measure.

*Sixth.*—That these Resolutions be printed, &c.